

## “My Sheep”

John 10:22-30

29 April 2007

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor  
Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

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At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

Prayer.

“I have told you,  
and you do not believe,”  
Jesus tells the crowd.  
He has looked them in the eye  
told them straight up  
the truth,  
yet,  
not one of them believe.  
It is not for a lack of will,  
or a lack of desire.  
It is not due to an overload of denial.  
It is because they are looking  
but not seeing;  
their expectations  
not even in the same universe  
to what Jesus offers.  
Oh, yes,  
they want to believe,  
they want to believe with all their heart,  
that Jesus is the One,  
the Messiah,  
who has come to save them.

Doesn’t everyone want to believe?  
Why else do people play the lottery?  
Why else do people submit themselves to

unproven and non-validated therapies?  
Doesn’t everyone want to believe  
that they are greater than the masses,  
the one exception,  
the one who will be the sole survivor  
in a company of soldiers making a suicidal  
charge,  
or the one exception to medical statistics?  
Doesn’t everyone want to believe  
that life is always destined to get easier,  
that their children will grow up to exceed  
the quality of life of their parents?  
In our consumer driven,  
free-market society,  
don’t we want to believe that  
more is better,  
bigger is better,  
and that the one who dies with the most toys  
wins?  
Doesn’t everyone want to believe  
that their nation  
their cultural characteristics  
and their religion  
is best, brightest, and most well informed,  
and everyone else a Cretan,  
a deranged suicide bomber,  
or enemy combatant?

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Yes, we want to believe!

But, do we want to believe in Jesus?

This is the crux of the moment,  
the point of this passage.

Do we want to become  
one of His sheep,  
to learn His ways,  
to heed His voice?  
Or has our belief  
become so skewed by our selfish demands  
that we say, "Jesus!" on Sunday  
but say something entirely different  
every day for the rest of the week?

The truth is  
temptations of this world  
are mighty powerful;  
temptation  
to place our faith and trust  
in anything other than Christ.  
Temptation calls  
us to nibble ourselves astray,  
to subtly allow ourselves  
to be swayed by public opinion,  
by the latest technology,  
or with the newest fad.  
We want to follow Jesus  
in name only,  
leaving the substance  
up to paid professionals,  
preachers, theologians, and academics.  
It is as if ,  
the older we get,  
the more difficult it becomes  
to drown out all the noise and confusion  
that sin just loves to create.  
We want to believe,  
but on our terms,  
not on God's.

Turn off CNN, your computer and cell-  
phone.  
Slow down to fifty-five.  
Tune out the artificial demands  
we've placed upon ourselves.

Take the time to stop and look  
into the pupils of another soul  
and be daring enough  
to ask sincerely  
"How is it with you?"  
Then sit back and be prepared to listen.  
If you truly listen,  
you will hear the voice of Jesus;  
that still, small voice  
of Jesus Christ will be loosed,  
and you will be known as  
"one of His."

Oh, we want to believe, yes we do.  
Even more so,  
Jesus wants us to believe.  
Not for what he can do for us,  
but what we can do  
in His name,  
on behalf of God's kingdom.  
Jesus wants us to believe  
such that we put our words into actions,  
assume the same values of Jesus  
and become his hands for ministry.  
Whether it is teaching, sewing, or laying  
block,  
caring for seniors,  
working on behalf of children,  
or extending love and compassion  
to the least, the lost, or the forgotten,  
Jesus wants us to believe.

So there we have it:  
Jesus wants us to believe,  
and we want to believe.  
Jesus wants us to be his sheep,  
and we are desperate for him  
to be our Shepherd.  
Pay attention to the person,  
and listen for his voice:  
"I give them eternal life,"  
Jesus assures,  
"and they will never perish."  
No one will snatch them out of my hand."  
Amen.

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